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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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New, easier way to receive TANF benefits

VDSS launches debit card program statewide for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Richmond, Va. – Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) can now receive their TANF benefits faster and more securely.

Starting Sept. 1, 2008, the Virginia Department of Social Services will begin offering Virginia Debit MasterCard® cards to TANF recipients who choose this new electronic method. TANF payments will be automatically issued each month to a Virginia Debit MasterCard® account. Recipients will be able to retrieve their money through Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), banks or by using the cash back option at retailers.

Benefits to Virginia Debit MasterCard® participants:

- Funds will be available on the first of each month, including weekends and holidays
- Accepted at thousands of locations
- Can be used to make purchases or get cash back at retailers
- No lost or stolen checks
- No need to use costly check cashing services
- A bank account is not required
- Safe, convenient and secure

Benefits to the Commonwealth:

- Significantly reduced printing and postage costs
- Decreased opportunity for fraud
- More efficient business process

TANF recipients have received complete information packages in the mail explaining the new program. Questions can be addressed with eligibility workers at 120 Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) statewide.

Recipients who wish to receive their TANF benefits via direct deposit or paper check must contact their eligibility worker at their LDSS by Aug. 15, 2008. Beginning Sept. 1, TANF

payments will be automatically deposited to a debit card account, unless the recipient makes other arrangements with his or her eligibility worker.

The program will be available to the approximately 29,000 TANF families across Virginia. The program was piloted successfully in Suffolk, Colonial Heights, Accomack and Chesterfield, where 79 percent of recipients opted to receive their benefits through this new electronic method.

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Interviews are available upon request. For additional story ideas and information, contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.

The VDSS Home Office is located in Richmond and administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services through 120 local departments of social services throughout the state. The VDSS mission is “People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities.”